

Balance the Breath

by Regina Ann

According to scientific studies, the most common cause of all disease is stress. With all the experiences we encounter in a typical day it is small wonder we experience stress. Stress relief is a money making opportunity these days. Everything from pharmaceuticals to natural remedies line the landscape to help us cope with stress. With all this focus on stress, or relief from it, I am often asked advice on how to relieve stress. My answer is balance.

Balance is defined by dictionary.com as *being in a state of equilibrium or equipoise; mental steadiness or emotional stability; a habit of calm behavior, judgment, etc.* Where we are in balance, stress cannot reside. Just as turning on a light switch sends the darkness away, so to balance releases stress. The magic of balance is simply that being in balance allows all things to flow freely without constraint.

For those seeking balance the first place to begin is with the breath. Most people have never learned to breathe deeply or in balance. If you are a typical person you breathe shallow, just enough to sustain life. Research has shown that deep breathing oxygenates the blood, vital organs (including the brain), aids in digestion, reduces headaches, and relieves stress. Dr. Andrew Weil offers that “if I had to limit my advice on healthier living to just one tip, it would be simply to learn how to breathe correctly.”

Deep breathing means bringing oxygen into an area called the lower Dantian located between the naval and pelvic bone. The lower Dantian is considered the most vital of the Dantians for collecting, transforming, and circulating energy in the body.

Check your breathing with this simple test.

- with your back straight, place your hands midway between your naval and pelvic bone
- take a normal breath, in and out, paying attention to your hands

If your hands did not move out and in with your breathing, oxygen is not getting to your lower Dantian. Practice breathing so that your hands move out with your stomach as you breathe in and move in with your stomach as you breathe out. *Caution: Start practicing deep breathing slowly. I recommend you do only 3 deep breaths at a time until you become accustomed to deep breathing.*

As you learn to breathe deeply and it becomes habit you can learn to balance your breath. To breathe balanced you simply inhale and exhale in balance. To train your body and mind for this simply focus on counting as you inhale and exhale making certain that the count is the same for each.

Training yourself to breathe balanced may allow you to remain calm throughout experiences that once would have created stress. It may allow you to feel better and even feel more focused. One of my many sayings to my students is, “As one balances breath,

so one balances life.” As you begin training yourself for balanced breathing, remember that any habit takes 28 consecutive days to cultivate.

Wishing you Balance ~ in Breath and in Life

Regina Ann ~~*

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